

Shambling Horror

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Summary: A new life. A new world. A new breed of monster. All he ever wanted to do was put a permanent end to war, that was why he'd joined the research team for Project Claymore. Now, because of him, Priscilla is free and the end of the world is his to make right.

Shambling Horror

_I'm just going to go ahead and post this first chapter to see how things go with it, if it seems interesting to people etc I will continue posting chapters when I have the time and have them done.

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What I find most fun about fanfiction is finding a really good AU that's 'out there' but not so much so that it's ridiculous; Claymore doesn't really have any of those to the same degree a lot of other series do and I wanted to try and change that; after a lot of messing around with various ideas this is what I came up with. If that sort of thing isn't your cup of tea you have been warned: that's what this is.

This is a modern day zombie AU (Yoma being technically brain hijacking parasites translated over to zombies fairly well so that's what I went with) with the "yoma" being your fairly typical walking dead and the "Awakened" being more similar (loosely) to the evolved T-virus type Resident Evil zombies.

What to expect:

- Modern AU so modern technology etc though not all of it is easily usable due to the outbreak

- implied reincarnation

- This is ultimately a Raki x Clare fic, if you want a Raki x multi you should read my other story Demon's Blood.

As usual reviews are much appreciated and often times essential in fixing big mistakes so please send me feed back comments questions etc. If nothing else it helps to know people are actually reading these.

***for some reason the last part got chopped off the first time so I've reposted it.

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><p>CHAPTER ONE: QUEEN OF THE DAMNED

It was at the dawning of time that the Devil devised the single greatest annoyance to ever blight the lives of man and set it loose upon the mortal world and it was to the high pitched screaming ruckus of the blasphemous thing that he opened his tired eyes what seemed only moments after first collapsing in a boneless heap atop his mattress. The bed, like the vast majority if not all of the furniture contained within his small apartment, had only been used a paltry number of times inside of the near ten years he'd lived there since graduating medical school and only a few of those uses had been in the furtherance of sleep.

Outside of his window the sun had only just begun to consider getting up itself at that near ungodly hour, as evidenced by the pale grey glow that just barely managed to force its way through the chink in his curtains and stair the white ceiling over his head the pale color of weak tea. Body numb and heavy with exhaustion that went beyond bone deep and possessed of not even half a mind to move he proceeded to lay there amidst the pillows and disturbed sheets, watching the sluggish strengthening of the light from outside and contemplating the pros and cons of taking the bed-side annoyance out behind the proverbial barn for a blind date with the .45 locked safely away in his nearby gun safe. All the while the thing just kept up with the incessant screeching until finally, unable to take it anymore, he rolled over onto his side and gave the sleep button a vindictive whack. The red numerals blinked innocently up at him from beneath the canopy of his bedside lamp, proclaiming the time as 4:47 in the morning. He had precisely forty five minutes to shower, dress, get breakfast and get to his office; a feat of timing in and of itself even without him spending another moment sprawled out in bed.

Reluctant and still unhappy over the results of his appeal to his superiors the night prior a heavily sleep deprived Raki peeled himself off of his mattress and-wearing nothing but a pair of boxers-padded across the carpeted floor of his flat to the bathroom. His reflection in the wall-length mirror immediately caught his eye upon flicking on the nearby light switch and he turned his focus briefly to what it was that he saw there. A young man still in his prime though only just at nearly thirty with both the sun-kissed skin and athletic build that spoke to a life spent active and in the open air rather than the reality of white coats and artificially chilled air that was his insulated world. His hair was so dark a blonde that it nearly appeared brown, shaggy and hanging down nearly to his shoulders. He reached up a hand and quickly ran his fingers through it.

_I'll have to get this cut soon. Not only is it getting dangerously

close to an 'unprofessional' length, but pretty soon I'll have to start asking one of my female colleagues if I can borrow a hair tie at the lab._ Frowning briefly, his brown eyes drifted momentarily to a place over his brow which had always seemedâ€|implacably empty in the absence of any facial scars. Dismissing that thought and the others it dragged up with it as the ludicrous machinations of a life-time of reoccurring hazy dreams he turned away from the mirror and switched on the overhead exhaust fan. Hot water hissed from the clicking copper pipes, washing away much of exhaustion and frustration as it flowed across the contours of his chest. Unable to properly enjoy the shower on account of rapidly tightening time restraints he stepped out quickly and towed dry, changing into a sweater and khakis and leaving his hair damp to the cold air.

His kids were found atop the table of the kitchen where he'd left them, and after quickly grabbing a breakfast of coffee and a chocolate donut made it to his parking spot with exactly five minutes left to spare. Exhaling a sigh of relief he opened the car door and, with coffee and donut in hand, made his way in through the front door.

"Morning, Raki."

"Good morning, Melody. Good to see you; been a while." He smiled and pulled the white lab coat down off the rack.

"I'll say. We were all shocked when we heard you went home last night; some of the newer hires actually thought you lived here."

"Just dedicated is all."

The woman he worked in distant concert with blinked at him in a mild shade of surprise. "A man like you? You're not the type someone would expect to be so supportive of a war."

"I support peace, and that's precisely what success in this endeavor would lead to. A sad truth that in this day and age ending a stick fight comes down to showing up armed with the entire tree." Raki folded the coat over his arm and added gruffly "besides, I'm dedicated not to developing a weapon but to keeping a promise I made on the first day that I joined this project. Now, if you'll excuse me?"

"Of course. I'm sure you have a lot to do."

Quick sure steps saw him to his office; hanging the coat over the back of his chair he lowered himself down at his desk and flipped open a nearby file of the latest lab reports after digging the donut he'd purchased out of its thin plastic bag.

"Eating like that is going to kill you, Raki. It may be all well and good now, while you're still twenty something, but it'll start catching up to you when you've hid about the age of 50."

The young scientist smirked. "Sounds like you're speaking from experience, Rubel, but I don't have to worry about being clubbed in a dark alley by my 'poor eating habits'. After all, the stress from overworking myself here will put me in the ground way before that happens." He took a sip of his coffee. "But you're here because you

heard about the real reason I went home last night. Because you know better than 'tired'."

"We both knew they wouldn't take well you yourâ€¦unique opinion. You're lucky that you weren't immediately fired; I hope you've not surprised."

"I'm not. I expected it, but I had to try."

The bald man across the room from him emitted a strained sigh. "Well, at least you're not delusional."

"She deserves better than this."

A moment of silence. "It would appear that the 'not delusional' comment was a bit hasty, but I suppose I've worked with worse." Raki made a point of ignoring him. "Generally 'temporary paid leave' implies you stay at home until told other-wise. So why are you here?"

"You know the answer to that already."

"Because you feel like your demon needs you. Believe it will even notice you're not the one seeing to it; that you share some sort of bond that's rendered her harmless."

The young man nearly knocked his coffee over in anger, the file in front of him shutting sharply with a snap. "Priscilla isn't a monster!"

"What else would you call Patient Zero? She killed her own parents and multiple other people. Ate their flesh. Destroyed an entire town with her taint; they had to fire bomb it to nothing in order to stop those _things_ from getting out. Enlightening and useful as she's been for research purposes, we've lost researchers as well to the taint carried in the samples getting into cuts or eyes. Your obsession with rehabilitating something that was never human to begin with is both unhealthy to you and dangerous to the rest of us."

"Get out of my office!" Raki felt his hackles beginning to rise and stood quickly, throwing the coat around his shoulders and storming passed the shorter man. Out into the hallway and towards the research center. No one who he passed said anything or tried to stop him, either to engage in friendly conversation or to attempt to send him away, likely due to the dark expression on his face. She was alone, as always, inside of the windowless cell when he entered. He closed the heavily reinforced door behind him but didn't bother with locking it and immediately felt her dark eyes come to rest curiously upon him. Slowly, he turned to her and did his best to smile.

"Hey, Pris." The metal bite mask they'd forced her into prevented her from speaking back to him but he could tell that she was happy to see him by what he could still make out of her face. Slowly, he crossed the room towards her. "Iâ€¦have some bad news. Last night I talked to the leaders of the project about you. About how what they've been subjecting you to isn't acceptable; that you're not some savage animal but a littleâ€¦well, I guess you'd be a teenager now. You are 19 after all." Raki felt his face fall. "They disagreed. I'm sorry. I did my best. Her brown hair fell forwards into her eyes as she leaned slightly toward him; the noise she made around the mask wasn't words

but it sounded consoling. Almost seven years he'd worked with her and never once had she even been mildly aggressive with him. Not through all the times he'd had to take blood or gently remove samples of flesh, watching the wounds vanish instantly. It was nothing more than calm small motions and those telling near black eyes. "I'd like to try something, if that's alright? It's something I'm really not supposed to do, though, so you'll have to promise to not tell anyone alright?" she nodded eagerly eyes never leaving his. Yes, Raki was sure of it; deep down in his very core he didn't believe she was even remotely dangerous. "Alright. I'm going to let you out of some of your restraints and let you walk around in here a bit. You can't leave but it's a start." Carefully, he reached up to the back of the mask. Fumbled the buckle free and the lowered it to the little cot on which Priscilla was sitting, she smiled at him and held out her wrists.

"Thank you, Raki. Will you please undo my hands too?"

He returned the smile and pulled the little key from his packet. Freeing her hands and allowing her to stand up. "Like I said, doing this alone-taking the mask off at all-is breaking protocol. Now, more than ever, it'll definitely get me fired if anyone finds out."

"I won't tell. It wouldn't be a benefit to me to have you leave." Her fingers were long and thin and cold as they found his hand with a delicate touch. Priscilla raised it from his side and rested it against one cheek, leaning into the calloused palm and letting her eyes close. "All my life no one cared for me. Not my parents or anyone in that wretched little town. Not the researcher in this little hell hole. To them, all of them, I was the wretched little devil girl or 'Patient Zero'. Then you came. You came and, for the first time in my life, someone else saw me as just 'Priscilla'. You were never anything but kind to me, Raki. Which is why," he realized too late that she'd been pushing back his sleeve as she spoke and now had his arm locked in a vice grip, "I hate that things played out this way." Sharp white teeth were painted red as they sank deep into his flesh, his muscles ceasing up in surprise and pain and sending him stumbling back. He heard it only vaguely as his back collided with the wall. Barely felt his body slump to the floor as shock took his legs from beneath him. His mind was blank, all thoughts obliterated but for the massive mistake he'd made and the terrible fate that was soon to come as consequence of his stupidity. Provided that he survived her long enough for the infection to take hold.

Priscilla had risen to her feet and begun examining the room, but his voice drew her attention back to him. "I understand. Why you hate them. Hate me. And I don't blame you. Because in the end Project Claymore hasn't done anything but cause you pain, and I've broken every promise that I've ever made to you. Not for want of doing so, but that doesn't matter." His head fell back against the wall. "For all that it matters, I'm sorry."

"Hate you?" Her eyes were very dark as she knelt before his slumped form, blood creating a crimson puddle at his side. Her hands came forwards, tracing gently over his throbbing pulse point before cupping his face in her palms. Cradling it. "I could never hate you, Raki. I love you. I have since that first day we met, when you walked through that door as not much more than a boy yourself and asked that simple question no one else had ever bothered to. Which is why I'm

giving you this gift so that you can live through the coming days to see my prefect world, and so that you can find me and help me rule." Her smile tilted slightly to one side, becoming perverse as she raised her wrist to her face. "If you're smart, you'll swallow."

Even assailed by the infection as it was his body recoiled at the hot metallic fluid which she forced into his mouth, but Priscilla's strong hands held his jaw closed so tightly that only the smallest trickle of red escaped from one corner of his mouth despite his most valiant efforts. The last thing that he saw was vicious triumph on his face before his throat moved of its own accord and everything went black.

* * *

><p>I'd first met Priscilla when I was twenty two and had just been recruited to work on Project Claymore. At the time she was only twelve years old, a little girl really, sad and lonely as she sat dejected in a padded cell. Bound and masked. Thought of as a monster. The others feared her, but I just felt sorry for her. No one would dare to work with her on an even remotely intimate basis, except for me and all the others thought me crazy for it. A fool for it. Hindsight truly is 2020 and I know, now, that they were right all along._

She was still a little girl when we first met and I couldn't help but think that she was the single most pitiful creature I had ever seen. A child. Cold and alone and falsely looked down on as evil. I made a promise to her on that day that I would see her freed from her prison one day. I'm sad to be able to say I've kept that promise.

This is all my fault...

Raki's eyes slowly opened, focusing sluggishly on the far wall in front of him. His mind slow and filled with a pale white haze, but still functioning as it was meant to. A fact that, he had to admit, surprised him given what he knew of the infection and its side effects. The wound where Priscilla's teeth had broken his skin were no longer present, a fact that only barely registered on his slowly warming mental process. Eventually, his gaze settled on the bite mask lying forsaken nearby. On the warped image reflected back at him in the dully polished surface.

As an active researcher on the team dedicated to the furtherance of Project Claymore Raki was aware, well aware, of the side effects of the infection. The enormity of the incredible and utterly terrifying which it so easily wrought upon the human form. In most, exposure to the virus lead to an almost catatonic psychosis which was only really comparable to that of a typical horror movie zombie. Blank eyed. Shambling, though capable of incredible bursts of speed when need be. Strong, but generally unintelligent and seemingly possessed of zero sentience what so ever. But in a small percentage of the population an exceedingly rare antibody existed in the blood. A bio-agent which pushed the virus to new heights, creating an improved version of the mindless creatures; the Project had dubbed these beings 'Ravagers'. Highly dangerous and hyper powerful with a feral predatory drive to kill, a level of intelligence on par with if not surpassing those of normal humans and a rate of cellular regeneration that was boarding

on ridiculous.

These highly dangerous infection, alongside Priscilla herself, had been the core of their research for going on nine years and from them Project Claymore had managed to devise a synthetic variation of the virus which allowed for the creation of a contingent of weaponized human fighters of the same name. Of the almost one hundred men and women to volunteer only a percentage had taken to the infection, and all of the men had destabilized. Turned feral, they'd been left with no choice but to euthanize them all. That had been the main problem which had necessitated the continued existence of the research project, the other being the fact that the highest level on their five tier power scale a functioning Claymore had managed to achieve was only about a two. Priscilla herself was a five, and reaching a par with her had come to be their ultimate goal. Thus far, nothing had come close.

Even in the face of a fire and inescapable reality the scientific part of him couldn't help but wonder if the extent of his transformation and the force of the waves of power now crashing unfettered through his form were somehow connected to the direct exposure to a considerable amount of Priscilla's undiluted blood.

Bone. It glittered dimly in the low light of the padded chamber. Clean. Pure white. Deadly sharp. Protruding from his flesh in a fashion which was truly nightmarish and grotesque. Organic blades quite literally jutting out at odd angles from his limbs and shoulder. A crest of spines which were really nothing more than overgrown vertebrae had turn through the flesh of his back alongside a skeletal tail which resembled a medieval flail in the amount of brutal spines that it was covered in. His limbs, too, had changed. His arms were now so long that they'd have brushed the floor had his height not shot up from just over six feet to just over ten and massive rending talons sprouted from the tips of his fingers. His legs were now much stronger, built for bursts of speed and power and bowed into something closer to a canine's ending in malformed paws. His chest had deepened to support shoulders only describable as massive alongside a thick neck and face no longer recognizable as human. Jaw protruding forward slightly into a sort of muzzle filled with jagged teeth and yellow eyes set deep into black sockets. Looking at himself now it was hard to believe that he'd ever been human at all. Panic threatened to overwhelm him.

_No. Don't let the situation get the better of you and think! _He chided himself sharply, standing up. His new body reacted so much faster than his old one had, finding its feet only milliseconds after the thought had passed over him. He nearly fell over again in surprise. _You're thinking fluidly just like you would have before you were infected. You remember who you were and what happened. And, most importantly, you're not hungry or craving raw meat. That means you're not unstable._ A small relief. _You've seen Priscilla change before. Focus on what you used to look like. On your real self. _ Blonde hair. Brown eyes. Skin a more natural hue than that of wet ash. He felt his skin begin to burn and itch and his flesh crawl, the massive bone plates clattering to the ground around his feet with a hollow clang. Lying lifeless against the tile like the shed shell of some monster from the darkest corner of man's most primal nightmares. His skin was slick with what almost resembled blood, though from where it could have come Raki wasn't sure; he had no open wounds. His

clothes, however, were in quite a sorry state. _I'll have to find a change of clothes on my way out. _Left with no choice he pulled the ruined lab coat tighter about his shoulders in order to sufficiently cover himself. _A weapon, too. Better not to risk using my new abilities too much until I'm sure of my limits._

The longer that the door to the cell remained open and the hall beyond it silent the higher the hairs on the back of his neck rose. Cautiously Raki approached the door and peered outside. Empty. He left the shelter of the cell and headed around the corner, taking care to keep his footsteps silent as he avoided the broken out lights which hung from the ceiling on stripped wires. Red hazard bulbs flashed on and off at an interval that could barely be considered regular, their glow dim and disorienting. A dark figure lurched towards him from the opposite direction, clothing tattered and form hunched as it dragged its broken legs behind. Raki didn't allow himself to so much as glance at it for fear that he would recognize the creature's face.

The wretch that had once been a man groaned low in its throat as he slid passed but otherwise made no reaction of his presence. More groans could be heard emanating from another hall, the walls of which had been rent with deep claw marks. He gave this one a wide berth, instead slipping into a small room. Inside were a number of lockers and he ripped the doors from their hinges until he found what he was looking for. He changed quickly into a long sleeved t-shirt and a pair of jeans which fit passably well and lifted a leather jacket from a peg on the nearest wall before making a mad dash towards the doors. It didn't matter if he'd been out three minutes or three hours, it was still a race against the clock; an absolute necessity for him to get out immediately if he wanted to live long enough to make right his biggest mistake. Even the near instant regeneration afforded by his change wouldn't be enough to protect him from the sanitation sequence.

As he's expected the front doors, when he reached them, were tightly locked. Sealed behind those few who had managed to escape. Raki dug his fingers into the small space between the doors and yanked with all of the considerable strength he now possessed, the hinges shrieking in loud protest as he leveraged against them before giving way completely. Without missing a beat he barreled through the opening and out across the vacated lot, bolting up and over the nearest hill. He stopped and glanced back over one shoulder only after the earth beneath his feet shook and, with a low loud rumble, a cloud of orange flame rose into the darkening sky.

End
file.